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Area fire department honor guards pay tribute to fallen fire chief

The Paw Paw Fire Department Honor Guard, shown above, and the Lawton Fire Department Honor Guard, both assisted with the visitation and funeral service for Hamiliton Fire Department Chief David Haverdink on Monday and Tuesday, Jan. 5 and 6. The funeral was held Tuesday, Jan. 6. at the Central Wesleyan Church, Holland. Haverdink died Dec. 25, from injuries he received Dec. 23, while responding to a medical call. He was struck by a passing vehicle on M-40 near 136th Avenue in Heath Township, Allegan County.

Photo courtesy/Paw Paw Fire Department

PPFD brings dogs to safety after falling thru ice

By Paul Garrod
Staff Writer
news4garrod@gmail.com

PAW PAW – Two dogs that ventured out on Ackley Lake, Paw Paw, on New Year's Day and fell through the ice, were both successfully rescued by the Paw Paw Fire Department.

Paw Paw Fire Chief Kyle Richardson said the department received the call at 10:55 a.m. that two dogs, a Lab and a Rottweiler, had fallen through the ice on the east side of Ackley Lake. The fire department arrived on the scene at 11 a.m. and confirmed that two dogs had fallen through the ice and were struggling about 50 feet offshore.

Richardson said the department's ice rescue equipment and techniques were quickly put into use. The two large dogs were successfully rescued and brought to shore at 11:07 a.m.

Richardson said the ice was very thin and unsafe. Neighbors nearby were trying to rescue the dogs but were unsuccessful. "It would have been a lot worse situation if they had fallen through the ice," said Richardson. It was Richardson himself who brought the two dogs safely back to shore. "The ice was breaking as I crawled out to the dogs. I was wearing an ice rescue suit which floats and is insulated. I had a safety line attached to me," said Richardson.

Richardson said of the incident, "It is a rescue that we don't have very often but we train for ice rescues every winter but rarely get to use our skills or equipment and training becomes very critical/ important."

The Paw Paw Fire Department was assisted by the Paw Paw Police Department, Van Buren County Sheriff's Office Central Dispatch, and Van Buren Emergency Medical Services (VBEMS).

PPHS Hall of Fame induction ceremony to be held January 16

By Paul Garrod
Staff Writer
news4garrod@gmail.com

PAW PAW - This year's Paw Paw High School Hall of Fame induction ceremony will be held Jan. 16, between the girls' and boys' varsity basketball games, approximately 7 p.m. at Paw Paw High School.

A reception to honor the inductees will be held at 6:30 p.m. in the high school cafeteria.

The Class of 2026 includes Coach Terry Kannegieter, Dr. Haleigh Gokey Leslie, Class of 2006, and Richard McLellan, Class of 1960.

Kannegieter taught at Paw Paw Middle School from 1973 to 2012. He served as the Paw Paw High School wrestling coach from 1973 to 1980 and achieved one state finalist.

Kannegieter is credited with resurrecting the PPHS boys' cross-country team in which he coached from 1985 to 2010.

1993 was a banner year for Kannegieter as his undefeated team was a state qualifier. The team produced nine state finalists. In addition to the 1993 state qualifying team, he also had state qualifying teams in 1994 and 1995. It was 1995 that Kannegieter saw his team mark an undefeated season and were regional champions. That stellar season, with 20 state finalists, saw Kannegieter named 1995 Class B Regional Coach of the Year.

Kannegieter was also instrumental in the start-up of PPHS girls' cross-country team, which he coached from 1985 to 2010.

As the boys' varsity track coach from 1983 to 2010, Kannegieter had 27 state finalists, and nine All State athletes.

Serving as the girls' varsity track coach from 1980 to 2010, Kannegieter had 50 state finalists, 18 All State athletes, and two state champions. In 2006, the team was regional champions.

Kannegieter oversaw the implementation of metric measurements and fully automated timing in events.

Dr. Gokey Leslie graduated from Paw Paw High School in 2006.

She was named to the Basketball 2005 All Conference First Team, Team Captain, Most Valuable Player; 2004 Second Team All-Conference; KVA Conference Champions 2003; Top 20 all in scoring.

In track, she was four time All Conference 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006; four time State qualifier All Region 4x200 (2004 and 2005); 4x400 (2003, 2004, 2005, 2006); 4x800 (2003).

She was Team MVP 2006, Team Captain 2005 and 2006.

As Regional Champions in 2006, she set a school record in the 4x200 and 4x400.

She graduated from Paw Paw High School with 4.06 Grade Point Average (GPA). She was a member of the school's National Honor Society and was a HOBY representative. She was a four-year Academic Learning Lamp Award recipient, and was named Female Senior Athlete 2006.

Attending Hope College, she was on the basketball team for one year, and four years on track and field, serving as the team captain in 2010.

She was on the MIAA Academic Honor Roll for three years, 2008, 2009, and 2010.

Dr. Gokey Leslie graduated cum laude in 2010, with a BA in Exercise Science and Psychology. She is a member PSI CHI, Mortar Board Society, and was on the Student Athlete Advisory Committee.

She graduated Magna Cum Laude from Oregon State University in 2012, where she received her master's in public health (MPH).

She graduated Magna Cum Laude from Northwest Christian University in 2019. She received a master's degree in business administration (MBA), and is a member of Sigma Beta Delta. She graduated from East Tennessee State University in 2025, where she received her Doctorate in Public Health (DrPH).

McLellan graduated from Paw Paw High School in 1960. He was class treasurer, a member of the Thespian and Latin clubs, and a member of the football team. He was editor of Paw Paw High School yearbook and newspaper, as well as president of the Journalism Club.

Following high school graduation, he graduated from Michigan State University (MSU) in 1964. He received his law degree from the University of Michigan (U of M) in 1967.

In 1973, he became a partner in McLellan, Schlaybauch & Whitbeck law firm. In 2010, he founded McLellan Law Offices.

McLellan served as Acting Director of Michigan Office of Drug Abuse. He was an Advisor to Commissioner of Food and Drug Administration, appointed by Gerald Ford. He was president of the Michigan Japan Foundation.

He served as George H. Bush's Presidential Observer in the People's Republic of Bulgaria 1990 election and was a Presidential Observer Nigerian in the1999 National Election.

He was a Volunteer Education Advisor for Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder and rewrote Michigan School Aid Act. He was an Adjunct Professor of International Studies at Michigan State University, and provided legal counsel to TEACH Michigan, drafted Michigan's charter school law.

McLellan served on board for Ghana and Somalia, organized business delegation to West Africa.

McLellan was named Lawyer of the Year by Lawyers Weekly magazine, and was a three-time Michigan Super Lawyer - 2006, 2007, 2009 by Law & Politics magazine.

He was recognized with the Robert A. Taft award.

McLellan served on committees including the State Bar of Michigan, Michigan Supreme Court Historical Society, and Michigan State University College of Law

Airport tree-cutting upsets neighboring homeowners

By James Windell

Lee and Linda Goldner have lived in a house near the South Haven Regional Airport since 1985. For several years, the Goldners along with many of their neighbors have voiced concerns about what the airport is doing to their property values.

"In my opinion, they are just abusing power and want us landowners out of their hair, so they can be done with us," Lee Goldner said in a recent interview. "If you take down all the old trees on my property, some of them are 100-year-old oak and maple trees, the value to my property will go down."

Although the Airport recently received a grant for "obstruction removal," that removal project did not begin until after October 2025. Yet the Goldners and their neighbors have been concerned about the encroachment of the airport's authority on their property for more than 15 years.

"It all started back in 2007 and 2008 when we along with several of our neighbors got a letter from the airport and it said that they had completed a new 500-foot runway extension," recalls Goldner. "However, it went on to say that due to errors in measurement they were going to have to take eminent domain over the airspace around our homes."

The Goldners and their neighbors got together and decided to fight the airport over this takeover of their property. The case went to court and a judge, citing Michigan precedence, allowed the South Haven Regional Airport to gain control of the airspace around the homes adjacent to the airport. "So, basically the judge allowed the airport to control our trees," says Goldner.

But the airport also dictated certain restrictions on some property owners. "For example,

we can't have groups of people at our homes because it might present a danger if a plane crashed," says Goldner, "and we can't build a pond on our property because it might attract birds."

Goldner says that they have attended all of the Airport Authority meetings during the past few years and have voiced their concerns. "The airport tells us that cutting down the trees is all based on FAA regulations," Goldner says.

Dan Sanborn, Manager of the South Haven Regional Airport, said that the airport received a grant to trim and remove trees. The South Haven Regional Airport was one of a number of small airports across Michigan that received grants. A $30,000 received by the South Haven Regional Airport is specifically for "obstruction removal."

When it comes to airports, "obstruction removal" usually refer to trees that have grown into protected airspace; brush or vegetation near runways or taxiways; objects that interfere with approach/departure paths; and anything that violates FAA Part 77 airspace surfaces. Clearing this vegetation is a safety requirement so aircraft can land and take off without risk.

Asked if the trees involved in this obstruction removal project are all on airport property or whether some of it is on private property, Sanborn said that some of the clearing is taking place on airport property, but some of it is on property that the airport has easements on. "There are easements in place to remove the obstructions that are causing the highest risks," he said.

Sanborn, who has been Airport Manager since July 2025, added that MDOT and the FAA have been asking the airport for a couple of years to clean up the approaches to the runways. "If we do this," he said, "hopefully we can get our license back. Right now we are under a provisional license and that's because our approaches are so obstructed."

A provisional license is essentially a temporary, conditional authorization for an airport to operate. It's issued by the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) Aeronautics Division when the airport does not meet all regulatory requirements, but the aviation authority determines it can operate safely while it works toward full compliance.

Sanborn indicated that one runway was cleaned up but the other one, Runway 23, needs to have objects removed to satisfy the FAA. Sanborn acknowledged that Linda Goldner had inquired at an Airport Authority meeting about the scope of the project and that she had been referred to Mead Hunt, the airport's engineering consultants. He also said that neither he nor Mead Hunt has held a meeting with the Goldners or other residents in the area.

"We have made multiple attempts to set up a meeting," Sanborn said, "and I'm still trying."

A meeting was scheduled for Friday, January 2, 2026 with one of the neighbors. And after the Beacon talked to Lee Goldner and Dan Sanborn it was confirmed that another meeting was planned the week of January 5.

In the meantime, Lee Goldner says that his home is the biggest investment of his life "and they're trying to destroy it."

South Haven has full calendar of events in January

Trixy Tang

By James Windell

You watched the beach balls drop in downtown South Haven on New Year's Eve. You might have danced in the streets before the countdown to midnight. But now that the new year has arrived, what do you have to look forward to?

Well, there's always Ice Breaker, South Haven's long running winter festival, which is scheduled for January 30 to February 1, 2026. The highlights of this festival will include dozens of professional ice sculptures displayed throughout the downtown area, the Chili Cook-Off where local restaurants and bars compete for the annual trophy, the Cardboard Sled Race on the Coast Guard hill, the Frozen Fish Fling at the South Marina, and the Pub Slide with food and drink specials at participating bars and restaurants.

But, until then, what's to do?

Actually, you don't have to go into hibernation mode for the next four weeks. Instead, you can participate in what South Haven has to offer in the meantime.

First off, you might want to celebrate the fact that in January you can actually go out to any of South Haven's many restaurants without giving up in frustration at the long waits.

Second, three local eating places also feature a trivia night. Every Sunday night, it's Trivia Night at New Holland Tasting Room, 253 Center Street, South Haven. Starting at 6:00 pm, you can bring your friends and family to enjoy showing off how much you know.

On Thursday nights it's trivia at Three Blonds Brewing, 1875 Phoenix Street, South Haven. The Trivia games start at 7:00 pm with a second game at 8:00 pm. And it's always free to play. But whether you play by yourself or with a team, prizes are awarded for 1st, 2nd, and "Least Correctness" in each game.

You can also play trivia on Tuesday nights at the Black River Tavern, 403 Phoenix Street, South Haven. Games start at 7:00 pm when you can test your knowledge across a wide range of topics – from pop culture to history, and everything in between.

Third, some local eateries and taverns also feature entertainment.

Although the Groovin' Grove on M-43 is closed for the month due to renovations, other venues will be featuring entertainment throughout January. New Holland Tasting Room will have entertainment on Friday nights starting at 7:00 pm.

The Black River Tavern will have live music on January 24, when the classic rock band Rock Shop will plat starting at 9:00 pm. On January 30, also at 9:00 pm, the high energy rock 'n' band Trixy Tang will be performing, and then on January 31, there will be music from 12:00 noon until well into the night with the Rock Shop, the one-man band Nate Holley, and the party band Vinylicious.

Harbor Light Brewery, 516 Phoenix, South Haven, will have live music in January only every other Saturday night beginning at 6:00 pm.

Finally, for families there are drawing classes for young people on Tuesday afternoons at 4:00 pm at the South Haven Center for the Arts, 600 Phoenix Street, South Haven. On Wednesday afternoons and evenings, the Center for the Arts has art classes for youth and adults.

The South Haven Memorial Library, 314 Broadway, South Haven, will have Community Bingo every Monday from 1:00 to 2:00 pm. And children will enjoy Story Time every Tuesday starting at 11:00 am.

And not to be forgotten, Senior Services of Van Buren County, 8337 M-140, South Haven, features a staggering variety of classes, games, exercise, trips, and so much more for older adults.

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2ND FRONT PAGE

Village Markets closed Weds., Thurs. for Harding's conversion

The Decatur Village Market sign thanks customers for 38 of support. Photo from the Village of Decatur, MI's Facebook page.

Jordan Wilcox
Assistant Publisher

The local Village Market grocery stores in Decatur and Gobles are preparing for a transition in ownership and name, marking a new chapter for the stores after nearly four decades under the same operators.

After previous ownership by Harding's Friendly Markets, both locations have operated as part of the Village Market Food Center chain since 1988. Founded in 1965, the chain once operated 11 stores across the region, including locations in Allegan, Paw Paw, Benton Harbor, South Haven, Dowagiac, Centreville, and Three Rivers. However, only four locations remain today in Allegan, Colon, Decatur, and Gobles.

The final day of operation under the Village Market name will be Tuesday, January 6th. On Wednesday and Thursday, all four stores will be closed as employees work diligently to convert them to Harding's Friendly Markets, which repurchased the stores in the latter half of 2025.

The stores will reopen on Friday as Harding's, under new ownership and management.

Local officials and community members expressed appreciation to the Murk family, who owned and operated the Village Market stores for 38 years. During that time, they functioned not only as reliable grocery stores but also as a significant local employer and a consistent supporter of community efforts.

Community leaders emphasized that while the ownership and name are changing, the grocery stores are not closing. Many familiar employees are expected to remain on staff following the transition, helping preserve the welcoming atmosphere and level of service residents have come to expect.

Sheriff's Report – Intoxicated driver arrested in Lawrence

Van Buren County Sheriff's Office Uniform Response stopped a vehicle for multiple driving violations in the Village of Lawrence. After contact with the driver, it was found that he was intoxicated. After the investigation, the driver was arrested for operating under the influence of alcohol (third offense) (felony), as well as an outstanding larceny warrant from Dowagiac Police Department. He was lodged for the incident with a hold place on him for Dowagiac Police Department.

"Just a friendly reminder that if you are going out of town and need your residence checked, we do that through our office. If you go to our website, you can fill out the property check request form, and we'll take care of it while you are away," said Van Buren County Sheriff Daniel Abbott.

"Thank you to all the individuals and organizations that donated food to our staff during the holiday season. Once again, the number of people and organizations that did it was nothing short of amazing. Here we are days later with refrigerators still full of food due to the amount that was donated," said Abbott.

Uniform Response handled a domestic violence call in Keeler Township. "Deputies investigated the incident and lodged the female half for domestic violence," said Abbott.

Uniform Response handled a larceny call at the Family Dollar in Grand Junction. "Three individuals entered the store with two of them getting the employee on the opposite side of store away from the third suspect. When they exited the store, the alarm went off. They were able to leave without being stopped. The incident remains open pending identification of the suspects. Once identified, they'll be interviewed and warrants will be issued," said Abbott.

Uniform Response handled a BOL (be on the lookout) call in Paw Paw Township. "The call came in as juveniles were going house to house in the late hours knocking on doors and running away," said Abbott.

Uniform Response handled a felonious assault in Pine Grove Township. An ambulance service was called to the residence for a lift assist to the suspect. "After getting the suspect on a couch and they started asking medical questions, he got irate and tried to grab a gun from a side table. EMS was able to get the gun before he got control of it and secured it prior to deputies' arrival. The gun was confiscated and the case is being reviewed by the Van Buren County Prosecutor's Office for charges. The suspect was not lodged that night due to his health issues that were going on," said Abbott.

Uniform Response stopped a vehicle for multiple driving violations in Geneva Township. A consent search of the vehicle produced a large amount of drugs. "One occupant had a warrant for his arrest and was lodged for it. The vehicle was impounded and the drugs were sent to the crime lab. Once the results come back, warrants will be issued on the suspects that were in their possession," said Abbott.

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Veteran of combat and classroom earns rare recognition

By Brenda Ortega
MEA Voice Editor

Special to The Beacon

MEA-Retired member Jim McCloughan received the Congressional Medal of Honor for his service in the Vietnam War which interrupted the start of a 40-year teaching career in South Haven.

From the get-go, Jim McCloughan was competitive "with a capital C," he says.

Small and athletic, he excelled at every sport he tried. At Bangor High School in the early 1960s McCloughan earned 11 varsity letters and all-conference honors in football, basketball, baseball and track, despite standing just 5-foot-2 and 130 pounds at graduation.

His competitive spirit also helped him overcome undiagnosed dyslexia that made reading difficult. He combined workarounds with a willingness to put in extra hours completing assignments and learning material to graduate near the top of his high school class.

He would go on to compete in football and baseball at Olivet College where he added wrestling to his repertoire. Despite inexperience in the new sport, McCloughan achieved back-to-back conference wrestling championships in his junior and senior years.

When his wrestling coach suggested McCloughan would make a good teacher and coach, his future took shape. He completed student teaching, earned a bachelor's degree in sociology, and signed a contract to work in South Haven Public Schools in May of 1968.

That summer he prepared for the job and coached junior varsity football until fate intervened. McCloughan received a draft notice from the Selective Service System ordering him to report for military duty at the height of the Vietnam War.

He left for basic training in August, underwent advanced training two months later, and deployed to Vietnam as a U.S. Army combat medic the following March.

McCloughan credits lessons learned from coaches, teachers and family members, along with skills and toughness developed through sports — especially football and wrestling — for his survival. In particular, he believes wrestling saved his life.

"That's where I learned mental discipline that gave me the ability to focus on this wounded soldier in the kill zone, while my men are firing at the enemy, the enemy's firing at my men, and me and this guy are in the middle of it," he said in an interview.

In 1970, he returned to teaching and coaching in South Haven with a newfound mission: "I wanted to prepare my students and athletes for their own 'Vietnam,' because everyone will face challenges in life — whether it's your parents divorcing, your house burning down, losing a loved one, whatever it may be,'" he said.

"I wanted to build them up and give them tools to make good decisions."

Nearly 50 years later, McCloughan received the Congressional Medal of Honor — the military's highest decoration for gallantry and bravery in combat at the risk of life, above and beyond the call of duty, for his life-saving actions during a fierce two-day battle in May of 1969.

"It's what my father taught me at a young age. He told me, 'Jim, you never do anything halfway. You do it to the best of your ability, and you do it until the job is finished.'"

IN SCHOOL

McCloughan got his first taste of teaching as a third grader attending Wood School, a one-room K-8 schoolhouse in Bangor Township still in operation today. He loved to be one of the big kids helping younger ones, and the repetition solidified his own learning, he said.

Born in South Haven, he moved at age one with his family to an old farmhouse not far from the school, with no electricity or running water, which had been owned by paternal grandparents.

His father was his hero, a jack-of-all-trades who turned the shell of a house into a home over years, he said. Both parents held jobs — dad at Everett Piano Company and mom at Bohn Aluminum — and he and two brothers built a solid work ethic helping around the house.

He has memories of his parents' dinner plates being less full to ensure the children had enough to eat, but adds, "We weren't poor; we just didn't have money. That's all there is to it. We were really rich with love."

In addition to athletic abilities, McCloughan showed a talent for singing from a young age. He made his first public appearance at age five, performing "Amazing Grace" at church, and still remembers the name of his elementary traveling music teacher, Mrs. Dykstra.

He transferred to "town school" in Bangor Township in seventh grade, into bigger classes grouped by age. "I was a boy soprano, and I was 4-foot-7, which set me up for a little bit of trouble until they heard me sing."

By high school, in addition to making his mark in four sports, McCloughan held leading roles each year in school musical productions.

Returning to South Haven to teach and coach in the schools where his father grew up and graduated was a dream come true, he said. McCloughan taught psychology and sociology at South Haven High School, retiring after 40 years of service in 2008.

Former students quoted in news accounts after his retirement remembered McCloughan as genuine, caring, inspirational — "a true gem" known for his humor, engaging style, and the life relevance he brought to lessons.

He also coached high school football and baseball for 38 years, coached high school wrestling for 22 years, served as a wrestling official for 25 years (selected to officiate 18 wrestling state finals), and coached American Legion baseball in summers.

He says one of his greatest blessings, outside of coming home alive from Vietnam, was coaching his own two sons who were excellent athletes and have become excellent men.

Among other honors, McCloughan has been inducted into the Michigan High School Baseball Coaches Hall of Fame, the Michigan High School Football Coaches Hall of Fame, the Michigan High School Coaches Hall of Fame, and the National Wrestling Hall of Fame.

A former player from one of his football teams, C.A. Cunningham Sr., described McCloughan as "selfless" and "charismatic" in a television news interview recalling an undefeated season in 1989. "He taught you to not quit and never surrender, never retreat," Cunningham said.

Cunningham became a science teacher and assistant coach in South Haven, working alongside McCloughan. Now an MEA-Retired member who owns a Kalamazoo-area lawncare and landscaping business, Cunningham described his mentor as "a builder of men."

However, it wasn't until McCloughan finally slowed down in retirement that he realized the busy schedule of teaching and coaching for decades had served another purpose — to keep his memories of Vietnam at bay.

Suffering from symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), including nightmares, he was steered into help by a benefits advisor at the Veterans Administration (VA) who noticed a change in him, McCloughan said.

Eventually he sought help from a VA counselor, a paraplegic Marine combat veteran who "walked me through my war experience."

Despite having earned a master's degree in guidance and counseling at Western Michigan University back in 1972, McCloughan discovered, "You can't counsel yourself."

IN BATTLE

His grandfather fought in World War I, his father in World War II, his uncle in the Korean War. Drafted at age 22, McCloughan figured his time to serve had arrived, yet it still came as a big shock when he finally got the frontline assignment.

At one time he thought he might get an Army teaching job after training. But college classes he'd taken to complete a physical education minor — in physiology, anatomy and first aid — made him a fit as a combat medic.

He admits to taking a walk to process the news, sitting at a playground, and crying. Then he gave himself a pep talk. "I said, 'Jim, you better change your attitude or you will die in Vietnam and you will not be a teacher. You better get ready to be the best soldier that you can be.'"

He was assigned to Company C, 3rd Battalion, 21st Infantry, 196th Light Infantry Brigade, Americal Division. Stepping off the helicopter in Vietnam, he was met by two sergeants.

Sgt. Doug Hatten, who was missing a tooth, wore a crooked helmet, and spoke in a slow drawl, saved McCloughan's life in combat on that first day, he said. Two men from the unit were wounded, two were killed, and McCloughan killed an enemy combatant for the first time.

"I was stunned, and that guy with the missing tooth and crooked helmet slapped me. He said, 'Doc, that's the way it's going to be. Do you understand? It's you or him.'"

All medics were called Doc, and that's the name McCloughan became known by. During his time in the unit, he was involved in several major battles, but on May 13 a bloody clash began to control Nui Yon Hill in Quang Tin province which would change and define his life.

McCloughan is credited with saving 11 lives, including 10 fellow soldiers and a Vietnamese interpreter, by venturing into the line of fire multiple times over 48 hours of fighting that concluded on May 15.

He was injured three times by shrapnel and gunfire during the struggle but refused orders to evacuate. "I said, 'You're going to need me. I'd rather be dead in a rice paddy than alive in a hospital knowing one of my men died because Jim McCloughan wasn't there to do his part on the team."

A second medic assigned to the company, Private First Class Daniel Shea, performed similar life-saving actions in the battle and was killed in action, leaving McCloughan as the only medic on the ground. Shea was awarded a posthumous Medal of Honor.

"I held 18-, 19- and 20-year-olds in my arms, heard their last words," McCloughan said. "Some of them were talking to God, and some didn't believe in God until it was right there, time to cross over. Some were calling me Mom. Then I saw the last breath of life come out of their body.

"I know that the price of freedom has been paid for in full."

Heavily outnumbered, the unit saw 14 soldiers killed and 43 wounded of 89 total. McCloughan didn't expect to survive. At one point, crouched in a trench, applying pressure bandages to a man with a serious abdominal wound, he wondered how to carry the soldier to safety.

He couldn't sling him over his shoulder. He decided he would hold the wounded man against his chest, get low to the ground, and race through the crossfire.

Suddenly a thought occurred: "It had been since I was a little boy that I told my father that I loved him."

He made a pact with God. "I said, 'Lord, if you get me out of this hell on earth so I can look my father in the face one more time and tell him that I love him, I'll be the best coach, I'll be the best teacher, and I'll be the best dad that I can be.'"

McCloughan did his best to keep his word, he says.

IN MEMORY

One of the ways McCloughan tried to heal old traumas after his retirement from teaching was to seek out his old Company C comrades. In some cases, it took internet sleuthing. Finding Sgt. Hatten required more than 80 phone calls because he wasn't sure how to spell the last name.

He was able to reconnect with 23 people from his unit, including Hatten, who had returned to his childhood home in a rural town in Eastern Washington. McCloughan later spoke at his funeral.

Some of the most meaningful moments came from contacting family members of those who didn't make it home, he said.

One of the men killed on McCloughan's first day in country had been proudly showing a photo he'd just received of his newborn son hours before he died. "He'd only been there a couple weeks."

McCloughan tracked down the son from the photo, grown and married, and called him in Arizona. "He never got to know his dad, but I got to tell that man, 'The last thing your father did was to brag about you and show everybody in his unit your picture.'"

And in 2019, McCloughan heard from a descendant of the first man he saved in the Nui Yon Hill battle. He had run 100 yards under fire to carry the injured soldier to safety.

"This letter said, 'You don't know me, and I don't know you, but you saved my grandpa in 1969. My mom was born when Grandpa came home in 1970. I was born in 1991. Last week, my wife and I had a baby boy, and this Sunday I get to celebrate Father's Day because of you.'"

McCloughan received two Bronze Stars and three Purple Hearts in the battle's aftermath, but his road to receiving a Congressional Medal of Honor took 48 years and bipartisan action from former U.S. Reps. Fred Upton and Carl Levin, Sen. Debbie Stabenow, Congress, and two U.S. presidents.

In 2009 a lieutenant from Company C revived efforts to award a Distinguished Service Cross to McCloughan, who still gets emotional listening to a saved voicemail from 2016 in which Stabenow reports that Defense Secretary Ash Carter upgraded it to a Medal of Honor.

Stabenow helped pass a bill waiving a five-year limit for granting the Medal. President Barack Obama signed the bill in December 2016, and President Donald Trump presented the Medal of Honor to McCloughan in July 2017.

Only 3,465 Medals of Honor have been awarded in all of U.S. military history, and just 61 living Medal awardees remain as of this writing. McCloughan insists the Medal is not his but belongs to the unit's 89 soldiers who fought bravely, especially those who gave their lives.

The Medal's significance means McCloughan is in demand at age 79. He spends many weeks every year traveling the country speaking to veterans' groups, non-profit organizations, students and others. He raises money and serves on boards of non-profits helping veterans and their families, along with related causes.

His busy time of year is the fall when he is often away from home for more than half the days between Sept. 1–Nov. 30, according to his wife Chérie, a retired English teacher from South Haven, who is his scheduler and travel arranger.

He writes his own speeches, tailored to groups he addresses. He makes a point with veterans to discuss mental health and to reframe the Vietnam War through the lenses of those who lived it.

With students, he focuses on character development, continuing the mission that began with his battlefield vow long ago. McCloughan is chair of the Character Development Program, a free K12 curriculum offered by the Congressional Medal of Honor Society.

He ends his speeches by giving audiences an assignment he's handed to thousands of students, athletes and coaches since he returned from war: Tell a special person you love them.

"There must be someone you haven't been able to say those three words to," he says. "Not on purpose; life got busy. Look them in the eye and tell them, 'I love you.' If you can't look them in the eye, use your phone. And there's a Part B to this homework: Tell them why."

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Freedom of Information requests trend upward in South Haven

By James Windell

Part of the duties of the South Haven City Clerk is to coordinate Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests.

According to a recent summary of year-end activities for the City of South Haven, there were 158 FOIA requests with still a couple of weeks to go before the year's activities are closed. That number is 16 more than the total for 2024.

"The number of FOIA requests has been trending up for a few years," says Megan Kiker, the City Clerk for South Haven. She says when she became City Clerk she didn't realize that handling FOIAs would be part of the job.

She's not sure, though, why the number of FOIAs has gone steadily upward. From 2018 to 2020, the average number of FOIAs was 40 a year. Since then, the number has steadily increased.

"It may be that people are more interested in how government works," Kiker surmised.

She said that there is not one most common type of FOIA that comes across her desk, but she emphasized that the City takes them all seriously and that considerable time is spent responding to each one and providing complete information.

This is not always easy because while some FOIAs require little time to gather the data and give the person who requested the information they wanted, others are more complicated and require more research and staff work.

She also says that sometimes the requests are not specific enough to let her know exactly what the person filing the request was looking for. By state law, she explains, a FOIA request cannot result in the City creating a new record as a work product. The FOIA does not require the City to create a new public record, make a compilation or summary of information which does not already exist, or answer questions contained in requests for public records.

"As an example," Kiker noted, "I can't create a table or a graph if one didn't exist before."

According to Michigan's Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), Act 442 of 1976, a FOIA request is designed to ensure transparency by giving the public access to most records held by public bodies. The Act applies to state agencies, local governments, public universities, and most public bodies. By law, anyone in Michigan can submit a FOIA request.

Requests must be in writing (paper or electronic) and must describe the record clearly enough for the public body to locate it. That public body must respond within 5 business days of receiving a request. And once having received that request, the public body may grant the request, deny the request (with an explanation), grant the request in part, or issue a 10 business day extension – but the extension may be made only once.

South Haven has its own set of rules that govern FOIAs. These rules specify that the City Clerk is the FOIA Coordinator for the City and the Records Clerk of the South Haven Police Department is a designee of the FOIA Coordinator, and may act on the FOIA Coordinator's behalf with respect to records kept by that department.

If a request is denied or denied in part, the FOIA Coordinator will issue a denial notice which shall provide either an explanation as to why the record (or material redacted from the record) is exempt from disclosure or a certification stating that the requested record does not exist under the name or description provided by the requestor; a description of any material redacted from the record; an explanation of the person's right to submit an appeal of the denial to the City Manager, or to seek judicial review in the Van Buren County Circuit Court; and, finally, an explanation of the right to receive attorneys' fees, costs, and disbursements as well.

Because staff time is involved in fulfilling a request, the City must charge a fee if the request takes more than 15 minutes of staff time. "We don't charge if it takes less than 15 minutes," Kiker says, "but the fee could end up into the hundreds or thousands of dollars if it requires considerable staff time."

Kiker cautions that sometimes certain parts of the City's records may be redacted. "Anything of a sensitive or personal nature, such as an employee's personnel record, their address, phone number or email, may be redacted," she says. "Even a signature may be redacted as that is an invasion of privacy."

To learn more about FOIA requests, visit the City website or see Michigan's Freedom of Information Act Handbook put out by Dana Nessel, Michigan's Attorney General.

Pullman seeks safe routes to school grant

Beautify Pullman has a January 12, 2026, deadline to be eligible for a Safe Routes to School grant through the Michigan Fitness Foundation that administers the safe routes to school grants. But Beautify Pullman must have the support of the Lee Township Board to be the Act 51 agency before the Allegan Road Commission will agree to the project. With Beautify Pullman's track record for securing grants and completing projects, the community hopes these Boards will step forward in time. Image: courtesy of Abonmarche

By Gari Voss

Beautify Pullman, a nonprofit group in Pullman, MI, has an amazing track record in making improvements to their community. One issue or need at a time has been identified, and this group of motivated residents has stepped forward to secure funding and put in the sweat equity to ensure that it happens.

At this time, they have a deadline of January 12, 2026, to complete the securing of funds for a Safe Routes to School grant. The final paperwork rides on two groups – the Lee Township Board and the Allegan County Road Commission Board.

In a conversation with Beautify Pullman Board President Debby Laraway, she shared, "Our funding for Safe Routes to School has been increased, but we still have the hurdle of getting the Township to be the Act 51 agency, because the Road Commission is requiring that. We'll be responsible for engineering costs and any overages. We want to ask the Township to guarantee the overages, which will probably none, but if there are any, we'll work to cover them."

When Laraway says that Beautify Pullman will take on the fiscal responsibility beyond what they are asking Lee Township to do, she can just refer to the track record of Beautify Pullman over the last five years.

This group began with nothing in 2020 but the vision to make Pullman a place where residents would be proud. It began with planting flowers, then building concrete flower structures, then hiring an artist to create an historic mural, and install a beautify welcome sign. Onward they went with the Pullman Town Square complete with a pavilion, green space, benches, gazebo, huge wooden train to climb on, musical instruments, and children's wall. Add a Veteran's Memorial with the names of service men and women from the Pullman and Lee Township area with signed, donated paving bricks. But it didn't stop there.

The group needed a place to meet, so they invested in a small house right next to the Town Square. After realizing that residents needed to access the internet, open Wi-Fi was added in the Square. A place to meet is not complete without celebrations, so there are celebrations, a Farmers Market in the summer, evening concerts, holiday celebrations, and the list goes on.

In a recent interview with Henry Wolf, the Office of Rural Prosperity Director of Policy and Grant Programs, Beautify Pullman Treasurer Pat Conway shared why Beautify Pullman had been able to achieve so many of its goals. The success relied on identifying a need, and not on what they knew, but on what they did not know and who they asked for assistance. There was no dwelling on the limitations, but on identifying what they wanted to achieve and finding a way to achieve it.

Wolf reviewed the funding that Beautify Pullman had been able to access to achieve their projects:

$100,000 from corporate and private funding

$50,000 from the Office of Rural Prosperity

$100,00 from the MI Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

$300,000 from the Safe Roads to School Program

$75,000 through Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

"This is an incredible track record for 5 years," Wolf stated as he got to the meat of the interview. "What was the problem you were try to solve when you applied for an engineering study for a Safe Routes to School grant?"

"The Pullman community makes up most of Lee Township in Allegan County, but it is not a city or village. Although it's not incorporated, we actually have a downtown. We have a major intersection. We have small businesses. We have a school. We have a health clinic. We have a large faith-based afterschool program. We have an active V.F.W. And we have a large park that Beautify Pullman built. But there are only a few sidewalks in Pullman, that don't really go anywhere."

Conway took time to review the process. "In 2022, we applied for a Rural Readiness Grant to investigate what it would take to bring sidewalks to our community. We really need sidewalks because we are on a section of county road that's 20 miles long from the lakeshore almost to the city of Allegan. The road does not have stop signs. We have one major intersection that did not even have a crosswalk, but it did have a flashing light. Then the Allegan County Road Commission did improve the intersection, but now, there is not even a flashing light anymore. They installed turn lanes that actually have made the traffic more difficult to navigate for someone who is a pedestrian or on a bicycle trying to cross the street."

Looking at the reality, Conway continued, "The community is a poor community with almost a quarter of the households that do not have access to a vehicle, so out of necessity, they walk and ride bikes everywhere. They go to the grocery store, pick up pizza, get their hair cut, go to the clinic. It is not safe. The school is a block off the main intersection, and every child is eligible for busing because they don't have a safe way to travel. Consider that there are areas where many children live only a quarter mile from school, but they have to be bused because of a lack of sidewalks."

Conway explained, "We decided to investigate sidewalks and bike trails."

That led the group to apply for a Rural Readiness Grant that financed the cost of the study and work plan done by Abonmarche. Now that the study is in hand Wolf queried Conway on what happened after the study was completed.

Since the Abonmarche presentations, the group has been working in earnest with the Michigan Fitness Foundation that administers the Safe Routes to School grant. Thanks to the comprehensive plan created with Abonmarche, about 30% of the estimates are complete. Michigan Fitness can grant up to $300,000."

The original plan laid out by Abonmarche was quite extensive, and Conway explained that the work has taken over a year to refine the route that would have the biggest impact on getting kids to school safely. Michigan Fitness introduced the team to the Technology Alternatives Program, and the Office of Rural Prosperity introduced them to the Michigan Infrastructure Office. It has been a process, but with the final approvals by the Lee Township and the Allegan County Road Commission, Beautify Pullman is ready to begin the next step of seeking bids and beginning the construction of their path to school.

"Beautify Pullman has invested over a half million in the community," stated Conway. "That's pretty spectacular. Most of the funds are through private grants with a few large government grants from the state. People saw that Beautify Pullman was here and making progress. People came onboard and helped. The transportation grant was very important. Through Rural Prosperity, I met someone from Lion Bear Adventures. This group is amazing at helping small communities access resources."

Beautify Pullman is not looking to achieve their sidewalk and trail plan all at once, but they do want to begin this first section of the construction. From there, the group will need to address other issues in the community, but for now, they are looking to the Lee Township Board and the Road Commission to acknowledge that Beautify Pullman will be fiscally responsible for the completion of Phase One of the Safe Routes to School.

Wolf and Seth Carlson from the Office of Rural Prosperity asked Conway for advice to other underserved communities. Her response was simple, "If you want to do something but don't know how, get a couple motivated people together and look for opportunities. Join the Rural Readiness Network and get familiar with the office. You don't have to be a municipality but can be a nonprofit."

Now Beautify Pullman must meet their January 12, 2026, deadline.

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VIEWPOINT

Airing the Grievances: The Worst of Washington's Waste

MIKE'S MUSINGS

MIKE WILCOX ■ PUBLISHER ■

Every December, Sen. Rand Paul releases his annual Festivus Report, a nod to the fictional holiday made famous by Seinfeld. The tradition includes an "airing of grievances," and for taxpayers, there is no shortage of them.

I just got the opportunity to read the report, and as usual, I am appalled at the ridiculous items our Congress feels the need to fund.

Paul's report catalogs examples of federal spending that range from eyebrow-raising to downright absurd. While Washington often dismisses these expenditures as trivial, they reflect a deeper problem: a federal government that spends other people's money with little concern for value, accountability, or common sense.

Among the most infamous examples are research grants that seem detached from real-world needs. Taxpayer dollars have been used to study shrimp running on treadmills, whether monkeys prefer gambling to guaranteed rewards, and how stress affects Japanese quail. These projects often cost hundreds of thousands — sometimes millions — of dollars. While scientific research has its place, it is fair to ask why Americans struggling with grocery bills are funding animal experiments with no clear public benefit.

Foreign spending is another frequent offender. Festivus reports have highlighted U.S. tax dollars paying for drag shows in Ecuador, a transsexual comic book in Peru, and gender studies programs in Pakistan. In other cases, money has been spent to promote tourism in foreign countries — essentially asking American taxpayers to subsidize advertising campaigns so people can vacation somewhere else.

Closer to home, federal agencies have managed to waste staggering sums on buildings no one uses. Paul has pointed to millions spent on empty or underutilized office space, including federal buildings that sit mostly vacant while agencies continue paying rent and maintenance. In one instance, a multimillion-dollar parking garage funded by taxpayers saw little to no use after completion.

The military is not immune either. The Department of Defense has repeatedly failed financial audits, unable to account for trillions of dollars in assets. Festivus reports have cited examples such as spare parts being purchased at wildly inflated prices and equipment left unused or abandoned. While service members do their jobs with discipline and sacrifice, the bureaucracy above them often operates without basic financial controls.

Then there are the grants that simply defy explanation. Taxpayers have funded projects studying romantic habits of fish, building museums that never opened, and developing apps that were never used. Once the money is spent, few in Washington seem interested in whether the project succeeded — or even existed.

Defenders of this spending argue that these line items make up a small percentage of the federal budget. That argument misses the point. Waste is not measured only in dollars, but in trust. When citizens see their money used this way, confidence in government erodes.

The Festivus Report resonates because it exposes a pattern: programs that never end, oversight that rarely bites, and a political culture that treats taxpayer dollars as monopoly money. Meanwhile, Americans are told that deficits no longer matter, that higher taxes are unavoidable, and that fiscal restraint is unrealistic.

Before asking taxpayers for more, Washington should prove it can responsibly manage what it already takes. That means fewer shrimp on treadmills, fewer overseas vanity projects, and fewer empty buildings collecting dust on the public dime.

Until then, the airing of grievances will continue — and rightly so.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

SHAES lists accomplishments for 2025

Dear Editor:

As we close out 2025, it's hard to know where to start, so I'll begin at the top. So far this year, SHAES has responded to 2,913 calls for service, 214 more than 2024, continuing an average annual increase of about 5% since our inception in 1996. We saw strong Paid-On-Call recruitment, added Career positions, welcomed new hires, grew our Cadet program and honored the retirements, resignations and transitions of valued members who helped shape our organization.

We strengthened community relationships, continued fire prevention in schools and among our elderly residents, furthered our robust area wide fire inspections, completed extensive training, and made key capital purchases, including grass trucks and a fireboat. Thanks to generous donations and grants, we placed new safety equipment and power tools into service and enhanced our mental wellness program.

We also celebrated promotions, with more on the way, and held several successful fundraisers.

2025 also brought moments of loss. We remember and honor SHAES members, respected public safety leaders from neighboring departments, and friends of our organization whose impact will always be remembered.

Every achievement this year was made possible by the support of our Authority Board, the trust of our community, and the dedication of SHAES members who serve 24/7/365.

Emergencies don't take days off, and neither does our commitment to each other and to those we serve.

Looking ahead to 2026, we have much to be proud of and even more to look forward to. Next year marks 30 years of SHAES, carrying forward a tradition of service that began as SHFD in 1888.

We are truly grateful for the continued trust you place in us to protect your families, your property, and your community.

As I write this rundown, our call-for-service total continues to climb as crews are dispatched multiple times, back-to-back, on New Year's Eve. I'm extremely proud to say that every one of those calls was covered. This is exactly what we've been working toward, and it reflects the progress we've made.

Happy New Year!

Brandon Hinz, Executive Director, SHAES

We need to continue to support Ukraine

Dear Mr. Editor:

The war in Ukraine continues on and on, and were all tired of it. But now there is a new wrinkle. The U.S. and Russia are trying to negotiate a peace treaty with little or no input from the country with the most to lose from a bad deal: Ukraine. The terms so far are a gift to Vladimir Putin. Ukraine is supposed to give up the regions the Russians have taken by their illegal invasion, limit their armed forces, and be prohibited from joining NATO. If this peace deal goes through, Putin will use the time to rebuild his army, rebuild his economy, and in a couple years he will invade Ukraine and take over the rest of the country. He suffered too great a humiliation to let things stand as they are.

What's happening today reminds me of another dictator from another time. In 1938 Adolph Hitler had been in power for five years. He had taken over Austri with scarcely a murmur of protest from England and France. After all, it was just two German-speaking countries uniting. Why stir up trouble about that? But now Hitler had his eye on another prize: there were three million ethnic Germans living just across the border in Czechoslovakia. He wanted to bring these people into the Reich. Invasion was a possibility, but that could have been costly. The Czechs had a decent army and good border fortifications. Instead , Hitler bullied, cajoled and deceived the Brits and the French into letting him have part of the country, promising that it would be his "last territorial demand in Europe." A few months later the Germans took over the rest of the country. For the sake of peace, the allies threw Czechoslovakia under the bus. The following year, in August 1939, the Germans attacked Poland, starting WWII.

Now, eerily similar events are taking place. During the Obama Administration, Russia stole the Crimean Peninsula from Ukraine. Ostensibly, it was majority ethnic Russians living there and nobody wanted to start WWII because a few Russians were repatriated to the motherland. Sanctions were imposed, but that's tantamount to doing nothing, since I've never seen sanctions achieve the desired results. Ever.

Fast forward a few years. Russia invades Ukraine. Again, the Eastern portions of the country are ethnic Russians. Once more nobody wants to risk WWII. We made the Ukrainians fight the battle themselves, which is fine. Unlike some others we have supported, they have fought like tigers. I personally thought the Russians would overrun the country in a couple weeks, but thanks to the supply of arms and ammunition from the West, the invaders have been fought to a standstill. Yet there are those who think we should abandon Ukraine.

Vladimir Putin is an evil man. He came of age during one of the most evil regimes of the modern world, and he embraced that world, becoming a Colonel in the Soviet KGB)The Russian acronym for "Committee for Government Security"). That's the outfit that sent millions of its own citizens to the Gulags (concentration camps) to be worked, starved, tortured and frozen to death. We must resist him at all costs. Once KGB-always KGB. Take note that his name in Russian means "Rule the World". I think he would like to live up to his name.

Putin's evil nature can be shown by the fact that he continues to bomb civilian targets in Ukraine. There is absolutely no military advantage to be gained by doing so. In WWII, we bombed most major German cities into rubble, partly in the hope of so demoralizing the German people so much that they would surrender. They didn't and neither will the Ukrainians. The continued bombing just spreads the misery. We need to continue to support them with everything we have.

Roger Leis

OBITUARIES

Elizabeth Jean (Maywood) White

Elizabeth Jean (Maywood) White passed peacefully in her sleep on 04 January 2026. She was 79 years old. Born on 10 April 1946 to Jennie (Laskovy) and John Maywood, she grew up on the family dairy farm in Decatur, MI, before graduating from Decatur High School in 1964. Beth graduated from beauty school in Kalamazoo and married Gary White from Lawton, MI soon after, in 1968. They moved into their home on County Road 665, where they spent decades working together building their lives. Gary passed in 2018 and she downsized, staying in the rural area between Paw Paw and Lawton.

Beth enjoyed a long career managing the parts department at Welch's. She and Gary also made friends across the region as the long-time proprietors of White's Pines Christmas Trees, where they welcomed visitors from as far as Chicago from the 1980s well into the 2000s. Guests were greeted with holiday songs on the radio and a cozy bonfire for kids to roast marshmallows.

In retirement, Beth spent past winters in Bonita Springs, Florida and summers in Silver Creek, New York, where she loved spending time with her grand-nieces. More recently, she was happy to have breakfasts with her two sisters, Mary Butcher and Donna Overton, then spend time with her dog and tending to her landscaping. She is survived by her sisters, many cousins, and the generations that follow all of them.

In keeping with Beth's wishes, cremation has taken place, and no services are planned at this time. Those wishing to do a memorial contribution are asked to consider the World Wildlife Fund or an Animal Rescue of your choosing.

Nancy J. (Caffrey) Lueder

Nancy J. (Caffrey) Lueder, 83, of Lawton, Michigan, passed away peacefully on Jan. 2, 2026, after recent complications with COPD.

She is survived by her husband, Alfred Lueder and children, Matthew 59, Eric (April) 56, Todd 54, and Christopher (Jeannie) 52. She was also a grandmother/great-grandmother to 11.

She was preceded in death by her sister, Sharon (Caffrey) Blackwell.

Born June 9, 1942, to John J. and Gabrielle D. Caffrey, she grew up in the Chicago suburb of Park Ridge, Illinois. After college, she worked for Liberty Mutual Insurance Company, where she would meet her loving husband, Alfred. The two married on Feb. 20, 1965, and eventually settled in Park Forest, Illinois, where she spent the first half of her life raising her four boys into men of integrity and heart. Not only raising four boys, but she also opened her home and heart to countless neighborhood kids, who still refer to her affectionately as "Mom." It was a testament to her extraordinary love, strength, patience, and a deep heart that would follow her into the second half of her life.

Following Alfred's retirement, Nancy and Alfred fulfilled their dream of retiring on a quiet lake, settling on Huzzy Lake in Lawton, Michigan. They embraced the Village of Lawton, and the local area embraced her right back. Nancy donated countless hours with local garden clubs, quilting clubs, St. Mary's Catholic Church, the library, and Bronson Lakeview Auxiliary. She was named the Paw Paw Chamber of Commerce Volunteer of the Year in 2011 and the Grand Marshal of the Lawton Summerfest parade in 2022.

Her most fulfilling achievement was the 25 years she spent with the Lawton Free Reader, a monthly local publication created and co-edited by her and Alfred. Each month, they would comment on local events, sports, and other stories, assembling the columns, creating the layout, arranging for printing, collating and even hand delivering this free publication. She worked tirelessly until publishing the last issue in December 2025.

Thank you for being a guiding light. Rest in peace, knowing your kindness and love will continue to live on in the lives of whom you touched.

Share a memory or sign the online guestbook at adamspawpaw.com

God's Garden

God looked around his Garden and found an empty place

He then looked down upon His earth and saw your tired face

God's Garden must be beautiful, he always takes the best

He put his arms around you and lifted you to rest.

He knew that you were suffering, He knew you were in pain

He knew that you would never get well on earth again.

He saw the road was getting rough and the hills too hard to climb

He closed your weary eyelids and whispered "Peace be Thine"

It broke our hearts to lose you

But you didn't go alone

For part of us went with you

The day God called you home.

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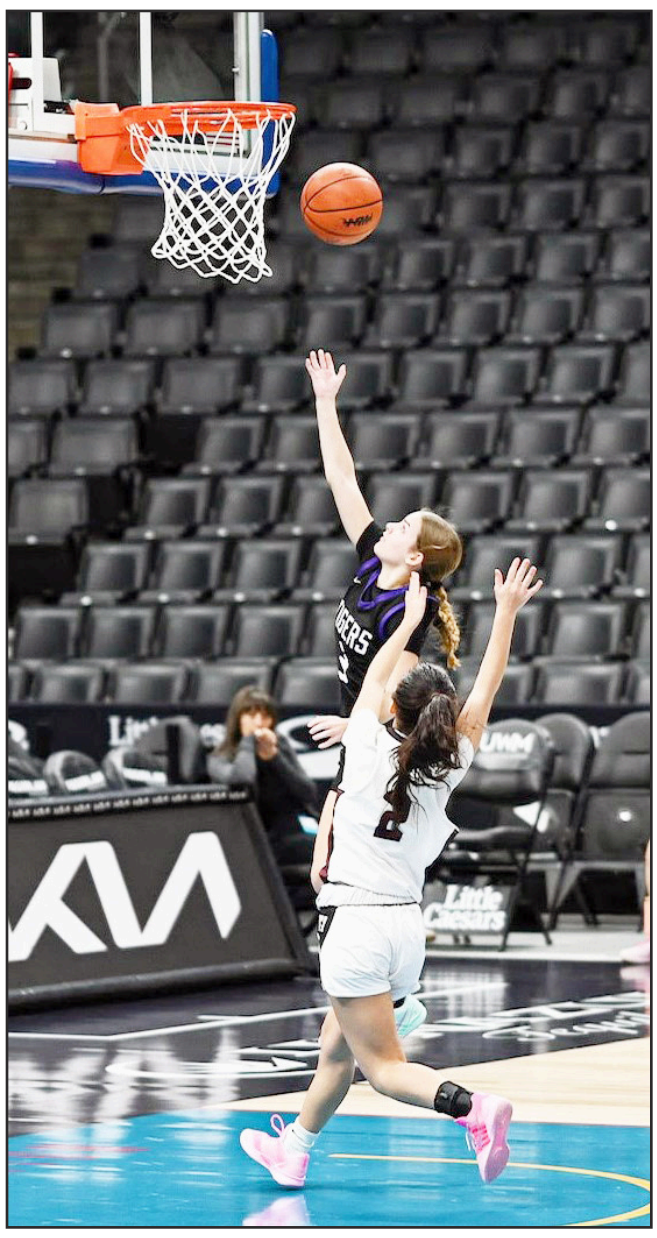
Lawrence boys defeat Watervliet in OT at Little Caesars Arena; Lawrence girls team suffers loss to Panthers



By Zack Linderman

The Watervliet boys' varsity basketball team lost a tough one in OT, 49-45, to Lawrence at the Court of Dreams event on Thursday, Jan. 1, at Little Caesars Arena in Detroit.

Freshman point guard Brayden Harasewicz led the Panthers with 17 points, 15 rebounds, and five steals. Freshman guard Hayden Billings also had a double-double with 15 points, 11 rebounds, while sophomore guard Jayden Brassard contributed six assists and junior forward Kyle Domingo-Sturgeon added six rebounds and four steals for Watervliet.

The Panthers traveled to Dowagiac on Tuesday, Jan. 6.

By John Guillean
Watervliet Public Schools Athletic Director

The Watervliet girls' basketball team came out with a victory over Lawrence at Little Caesars Arena, 30-18, Thursday, Jan. 1. The Panthers held the Tigers to single digits in every frame. After a slow start offensively, the Panthers scored 13 in the third quarter to put the game out of reach.

Scoring for the Panthers were Moeko Crago, 11, Daijahnae Hatcher, eight points, Leila Liberto Taylor, three points, Isabella Bultema, three points, Kelsie Gaston, two points, Aubrey Winnell, two points, and Addison Smith, one point.

The Panthers move to 5-1 on the season. They were back in action on Tuesday when they traveled to Dowagiac.

Watervliet Public Schools Athletic Director invites his former school district to play at Little Caesars Arena, Detroit

The games at Little Caesars Arena developed from an opportunity that Guillean had when he first took over the boys' basketball program at Lawrence. Guillean is now in his third year at Watervliet Public Schools, where he is the girls' varsity basketball coach and the district's athletic director.

"There is a program that the Pistons put on called the "Court of Dreams" in which teams have the opportunity at Little Caesars Arena (LCA). I put my name on the list five years ago when I first took over the boys' program at Lawrence so when my name got called this year, it made sense to invite the Tigers," said Guillean.

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SPORTS

Gobles wrestlers take first place

Gobles wrestlers took first place at Mattawan over the weekend.

By John Raffel
Correspondent

GOBLES — Gobles coach Erin Carlin led his wrestling team to first place on Saturday at the Zach Ford Invitational in Mattawan.

Finn Carlin, Brody Marshall, Devin Doorlag, Danny Timms and Hunter Piper each went undefeated.

"Still, more importantly, they provided mat leadership that resulted in three duals where not a single tiger lost their match," Carlin said. "Jose Boger was also strong in his return to the mat after injury, while Aiden Dukes and Bryce

Doorlag continue to get better and were instrumental in the Tigers' successes this weekend.

"The Tigers overcame a slow start and spotted every opponent 24 points (due to voids), to show the team's mental toughness and resilience."

The Tigers are back on the mat for conference duals vs Allegan and Schoolcraft on Jan. 7 in Allegan.

Gobles records are: Conference 3-1. Overall 10-4.

Lawton runner eyes strong future

Anika Weurding is a junior running for Lawton.

By John Raffel
Correspondentl

LAWTON — Anika Weurding completed an impressive cross country season in the fall for Lawton and is now training for what she hopes will be a very productive track and field seasn in the spring.

Weurding was a state qualifier for Lawton in the fall. She qualified by placing 14th at the regionals in Portage Central with a personal record of 21:43.8. She finished 181st int he state finals at the Michigan International Speedway with a time of 21:57.0.

She ran varsity cross since her freshman season and has gotten better every year.

"My freshman year I had to cut my season short from a knee injury," Weurding said. "My sophomore year I was not as fast as the previous year. I was moderate. This year I started to see my times speeding up."

She had previously watched the state finals as a spectator.

"I think I'll be a little nervous," she said prior to the race. "When I start racing, those nerves will calm down.

Weurding will run the distances for Lawton during the track season and will also pole vault.

She indicated her best sport depends on the year but cross country is perhaps her best sport. She runs a lot during the offseason.

Bangor girls beat Benton Harbor

By John Raffel
Correspondent

BANGOR — Bangor's girls basketball team improved its record to 2-3 on Jan. 3 with a 47-30 win over Benton Harbor, at home.

Alexis Wiśniewski had 20 points and five rebounds for the winners. She also contributed 10 steals.

A. Corona had eight points. Izzy Horvath had six points. Cielo Maladano had five rebounds. Horvath had two assists.

Bangor led 4-2 after the first quarter, 21-12 at halftime and 39-23 after three periods. Bangor outscored Benton Harbor 8-7 after the fourth quarter.

Wisniewski had two points in the first quarter, nine in the second, seven in the third and two in the fourth.

Horvath had a 3-pointer in the second quarter and one in the third.

Bangor was set for a busy week as the team was preparing to play home on Jan. 6 with Cassopolis and home on Jan. 7 with Coldwater Academy.

Bangor is also home with Hartford on Jan. 9 and at Centreville on Jan. 13.

South Haven player recalls magical soccer season

By John Raffel
Correspondent

SOUTH — Leif Arboreal was a sophomore midfielder for South Haven who was all-district honorable mention an d will remember this season for long time.

Arboreal was helped South Haven make the state finals and emerge as state runners up.

"He's young but also talented and mature already," SH coach Randy Bautista said. "He's a skillful player with natural talent. Great at dribbling and finding passes. And put in a lot of running as an outside mid. Big moments for us in the playoff run as well.

"Game winning goal in district semifinal. Game winning assist in District final. Goal in regional final."

Arboreal celebrated a win in the state semifinals over Fremont.

"It means a lot," he said. "All year we've been working toward the district finals. We go to the regional finals and won that. It means a lot being in the state finals.

"I think our team chemistry is really good. My strengths has been my dribbing and taking on the defender."

Arboreal did not play much last year but saw a lot more action in 2025.

Soccer is his only sport. "I like that it's a team sport," he said.

Mattawan girls off to 2-2 basketball start

By John Raffel

MATTAWAN — Rob Kuhtz's girls basketball team is off to a 2-2 start as Mattawan gets ready to come out of the holiday break.

"We are much improved from a year ago and we've had opportunities to win all four games," Kuhtz said. "Obviously rosters change with graduation, but winning two games against teams that beat us by 30-plus last year has been a confidence booster. All nine girls are contributing in big ways to help us experience the success we've had."

Kuhtz said Mattawan needs to improve on "Continuing to grow in finishing close games and being consistent throughout games. We need to learn to value every possession."

Stat leaders so far for Mattawan are: Charlotte Douglass (10th), 16 ppg, 10 rebounds/game (broke her thumb in second game of the year, will return in January. Caitlin Ryan (11th), 11ppg, 5 reb/game, 6

steals/game. Savannah Waterlander (12th) 7ppg. Annemaire Pelak (10th), 6ppg, 6 reb/game

"We need to continue to improve, have fun, and take advantage of every opportunity we have to grow

as players and people," Kuhtz said, adding that key will be "understanding that we don't have to be all-

stars, we just need everyone to star in their particular role."

Lawrence boys win at Little Caesars Arena

By John Raffel
Correspondent

LAWENCE — Coach Noah Wiswary Lawrence boys basketball team played on Jan. 1 at Little Caesars Arena in Detroit and beat Watervliet 49-45 in overtime.

"The Lawrence varsity boys struggled to find their offensive rhythm in the first half, scoring just 14 points and heading into halftime trailing 22-14," Wiswary said. "The Tigers came out with renewed energy in the second half and battled back, chipping away at the deficit. Despite never fully taking the lead in regulation, Lawrence stayed within striking distance as Watervliet continued to respond with timely baskets.

"With time winding down, the Tigers shifted into another gear. Alex Gardner ignited the comeback with a momentum-changing dunk, followed by an and-one finish from Glover. After cutting the lead to five, Colton Anders knocked down a huge three-pointer to make it a two-point game. Lawrence tied the contest at 45-45 and had a chance to win in regulation, but the game went to overtime."

The Tigers made the winning plays in overtime.

"A strong defensive stop led to a steal and basket by Glover to put Lawrence ahead. After another defensive stand, Alex Gardner sealed the victory with a jumper," Wiswary said. "The Tigers completed the comeback and earned a hard-fought 49-45 overtime win."

Lawrence improves to 5-3 on the season.

South Haven golfer finishes an impressive career

By John Raffel
Correspondent

SOUTH HAVEN — Faith Spies will have coveted memories of the 2025 sports season at South Haven for a long time.

She played varsity the past four seasons and said this was her best year.

"It was because of a lot of practice and a lot of repetition," Spies said.

She averaged in the low 90s for 18 holes. She scored an 89 as her lowest 18-hole score. "My driving is definitely what got me there," she said. "I think my putting was a lot of my strength. I made a lot of long putts that I hadn't made before."

In being a good putter "I think getting into a good routine was probably the best thing for me," Spies said. "I worked a lot on it a lot over the summer. I tried to perfect on how I knew where the ball would go."

In their final Divisional match of the season, the South Haven varsity girls golf team finished first with a combined team score of 204. Spies tied for 5th with a 49.

"It was the first time we ever won divisional," Spies said. "I think we were all consistent in our scores. We put in the work. I was five strokes from going to state.

The South Haven Girls Varsity Golf Team received MIGCA Team Academic All-State Honors,

Seniors Chloe Vanlandingham and Spies also received First Team Academic All-State honors as individuals.

Golf was her only sport. She started in the eighth grade.

"Golf has become my life," Spies said. "I will play club golf wherever I go in college."

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=• PUBLIC NOTICE •=

State of Michigan
Judicial Circuit - Family Division
Van Buren County
PUBLICATION OF NOTICE OF HEARING REGARDING PETITION FOR NAME CHANGE (NONCUSTODIAL PARENT)
Case No. 2025 7042
Judge Hon. Susan Metzger
Probate Court 212 Paw Paw St. Ste. 220, Paw Paw, MI 49079
269-657-8225
In the Matter of **Romeo Anthony Iracheta (Morales) TO: Daniel iracheta** whose address is unknown and whose interest in the matter may be barred or affected by the following:
TAKE NOTICE: Your child(ren)'s custodial parent, **Delilah Rose** has field a petition for name change on behalf of your minor child(ren). A name change hearing will be held on **2/18/2026 at 10:00 am at Probate Court, Court Room #3 before Judge Susan Metzger.**

County: Van Buren; Mtgr: Gary Phelps; Atty: Randall S. Miller & Associates, P.C. - Randall S. Miller & Associates, P.C.; 1st Pub: 1/8/2026; Atty File #: 25MI00753-1; Insurer: (unknown)
FORECLOSURE NOTICE
Attention homeowner: If you are a military service member on active duty, if your period of active duty has concluded less than 90 days ago, or if you have been ordered to active duty, please contact the attorney for the party foreclosing the mortgage at the telephone number stated in this notice.
Notice of foreclosure by advertisement. Notice is given under section 3212 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.3212, that the following mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the circuit court in Van Buren County, starting promptly at 01:00 PM, February 5, 2026. The amount due on the mortgage may be greater on the day of the sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information. Default has been made in the conditions of a certain mortgage made by Gary Phelps, Married Man to Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc., as mortgagee, as nominee for Union Home Mortgage Corp., its successors and assigns, Mortgagee, dated July 23, 2018, and recorded on August 7, 2018, in Liber 1672, Page 248, Van Buren County Records, said mortgage was assigned to Nationstar Mortgage LLC by an Assignment of Mortgage dated October 10, 2023 and recorded October 13, 2023 in Liber 1758, Page 164, on which mortgage there is claimed to be due at the date hereof the sum of Eighty-One Thousand One Hundred Sixteen and 21/100 ($81,116.21) including interest at the rate of 5.50000% per annum. Said premises are situated in the Village of Lawrence, Van Buren County, Michigan, and are described as: Parcel Number 1: Beginning at the Northwest corner of the land formerly owned by Lucius M. Hodges, said point being 1215 feet North of the West Quarter post of Section 10, Town 3 South, Range 15 West, thence North 4 rods, thence East 12 rods, thence South 4 rods, thence West along the line of the land formerly owned by said Lucius M. Hodges to the place of beginning. Parcel Number 2: Commencing 69 rods 10 links North of the West Quarter post of Section 10, Town 3 South, Range 15 West, thence North 4 rods, thence East 12 rods, thence South 4 rods, thence West 12 rods to beginning. Commonly known as: 720 N PAW PAW ST, LAWRENCE, MI 49064 If the property is eventually sold at foreclosure sale, the redemption period will be 6.00 months from the date of sale unless the property is abandoned or used for agricultural purposes. If the property is determined abandoned in accordance with MCL 600.3241 and/or 600.3241a, the redemption period will be 30 days from the date of sale, or 15 days after statutory notice, whichever is later. If the property is presumed to be used for agricultural purposes prior to the date of the foreclosure sale pursuant to MCL 600.3240, the redemption period is 1 year. Pursuant to MCL 600.3278, if the property is sold at a foreclosure sale, the borrower(s) will be held responsible to the person who buys the property at the mortgage foreclosure sale or to the mortgage holder for damaging the property during the redemption period. TO ALL PURCHASERS: The foreclosing mortgagee can rescind the sale. In that event, your damages are, if any, limited solely to the return of the bid amount tendered at sale, plus interest. Dated: January 8, 2026 Randall S. Miller & Associates, P.C. Attorneys for Nationstar Mortgage LLC 43252 Woodward Avenue, Suite 180, Bloomfield Hills, MI 48302, (248) 335-9200 Hours: 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Case No. 25MI00753-1
(01-08)(01-29)

County: Van Buren; Mtgr: Max Swank; Atty: Team J; 1st Pub: 1/1/2026; Atty File #: 524710F02; Insurer: (unknown)
Notice of Foreclosure by Advertisement
Notice is given under section 3212 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.3212, that the following mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the circuit court in Van Buren County, starting promptly at 1:00 PM, on January 29, 2026. The amount due on the mortgage may be greater on the day of sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information:
Name(s) of the mortgagor(s): Max Swank, a married man and Alexandria Swank, his wife via Loan Modification dated April 12, 2024
Original Mortgagee: Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc., as mortgagee, as nominee for lender and lender's successors and/or assigns
Foreclosing Assignee (if any): MidFirst Bank
Date of Mortgage: May 14, 2020
Date of Mortgage Recording: May 21, 2020
Amount claimed due on date of notice: $143,640.67
Description of the mortgaged premises: Situated in Township of Hartford, Van Buren County, Michigan, and described as: That part of the East half of the West half of the Southeast Quarter of Section 17, Town 3 South, Range 16 West, lying Southerly of the centerline of the Red Arrow Highway, except beginning at the intersection of the centerline of said Red Arrow Highway and the West line of the East half of the West half of the Southeast Quarter of said Section 17, thence Southerly on said line 200 feet, thence East 210 feet, thence North to the center of said road, thence Southwesterly along said centerline to beginning.
Common street address (if any): 66599 Red Arrow Hwy, Hartford, MI 49057-9725
The redemption period shall be 6 months from the date of such sale, unless determined abandoned in accordance with MCL 600.3241a; or, if the subject real property is used for agricultural purposes as defined by MCL 600.3240(16).
If the property is sold at foreclosure sale under Chapter 32 of the Revised Judicature Act of 1961, pursuant to MCL 600.3278 the borrower will be held responsible to the person who buys the property at the mortgage foreclosure sale or to the mortgage holder for damaging the property during the redemption period.
Attention homeowner: If you are a military service member on active duty, if your period of active duty has concluded less than 90 days ago, or if you have been ordered to active duty, please contact the attorney for the party foreclosing the mortgage at the telephone number stated in this notice.
This notice is from a debt collector.
Date of notice: January 1, 2026
Trott Law, P.C.
31440 Northwestern Hwy, Suite 145
Farmington Hills, MI 48334
(248) 642-2515
1581164
(01-01)(01-22)

-- County: Van Buren; Mtgr: John A. Gropp; Atty: Orlans; 1st Pub: 12/25/2025; Atty File #: 25-015501; Insurer: FHLMC
Attention homeowner: If you are a military service member on active duty, if your period of active duty has concluded less than 90 days ago, or if you have been ordered to active duty, please contact the attorney for the party foreclosing the mortgage at the telephone number stated in this notice.
Notice of foreclosure by advertisement. Notice is given under section 3212 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.3212, that the following mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the circuit court in Van Buren County, starting promptly at 1:00 PM on JANUARY 22, 2026. The amount due on the mortgage may be greater on the day of the sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information.
Default has been made in the conditions of a mortgage made by John A. Gropp, to Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc., as nominee for Top Flite Financial, Inc., Mortgagee, dated January 29, 2021 and recorded February 8, 2021 in Liber 1713, Page 540 Van Buren County Records, Michigan. Said mortgage is now held by PHH Asset Services LLC, by assignment. There is claimed to be due at the date hereof the sum of Sixty-Four Thousand Eight Hundred Five and 72/100 Dollars ($64,805.72).
Under the power of sale contained in said mortgage and the statute in such case made and provided, notice is hereby given that said mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at public venue at the place of holding the circuit court within Van Buren County, Michigan at 1:00 PM on JANUARY 22, 2026.
Said premises are located in the Township of Bangor, Van Buren County Michigan, and are described as:
THE SOUTH 1/2 OF THE SOUTH 1/2 OF THE NORTHWEST 1/4 OF SECTION 29, TOWN 2 SOUTH, RANGE 16 WEST. ALSO THE SOUTH 90 FEET OF THE WEST 300 FEET OF THE NORTH 1/2 OF THE SOUTH 1/2 OF THE NORTHWEST 1/4 OF SECTION.
41557 68th St, Bangor, Michigan 49013
The redemption period shall be 6 months from the date of such sale, unless determined abandoned in accordance with MCLA §600.3241a, in which case the redemption period shall be 30 days from the date of such sale.
If the property is sold at foreclosure sale, pursuant to MCL 600.3278, the borrower will be held responsible to the person who buys the property at the mortgage foreclosure sale or to the mortgage holder for damage to the property during the redemption period.
Dated: December 25, 2025
File No. 25-015501
Firm Name: Orlans Law Group PLLC
Firm Address: 1650 West Big Beaver Road, Troy MI 48084
Firm Phone Number: (248) 502.1400
(12-25)(01-15)

County: Van Buren; Mtgr: PennyMac Loan Services, LLC v. Travis Schuster; Atty: Trott Law P.C. - Trott Law P.C.; 1st Pub: 12/18/2025; Atty File #: 504518L03; Insurer: (unknown)
Van Buren County Circuit Court Case No. 25-074638-CH
NOTICE OF JUDICIAL SALE
The property described below shall be sold at public auction, by an authorized sheriff/deputy sheriff or county clerk/deputy county clerk, to the highest bidder, at the Circuit Court for the County of Van Buren, on the 5th of February, 2026 at 1:00 pm, local time.
On said day at said time, the following described property shall be sold: real property situated in the Township of Porter, County of Van Buren, State of Michigan, and is particularly described as: That part of the Southwest 1/4 of Section 8, Town 4 South, Range 13 West, described as Beginning at a point on the North and South 1/4 line of said Section, which is South 00 degrees 55 minutes 10 seconds East, 600.00 feet from the center of said Section 8, said beginning point being North 00 degrees 55 minutes 10 seconds West, 2034.10 feet from the South 1/4 post of said Section; thence South 00 degrees 55 minutes 10 seconds East along said 1/4 line, 375.00 feet; thence North 89 degrees 52 minutes 57 seconds West parallel with said East and West 1/4 line, 550.00 feet; thence North 00 degrees 55 minutes 10 seconds West parallel with said North and South 1/4 line, 375.00 feet; thence South 89 degrees 52 minutes 57 seconds East parallel with said East and West 1/4 line, 550.00 feet to the point of beginning Tax Parcel ID: 80-16-008-014-10 More commonly known as: 78560 M 40 Lawton, MI 49065 This notice is from a debt collector.
Date of Notice: 12/18/2025 Trott Law, P.C.
1580064
(12-18)(01-22)

County: Van Buren; Mtgr: James L Wellington; Atty: Team X; 1st Pub: 12/18/2025; Atty File #: 527183F01; Insurer: (unknown)
Notice of Foreclosure by Advertisement
Notice is given under section 3212 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.3212, that the following mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the circuit court in Van Buren County, starting promptly at 1:00 PM, on January 15, 2026. The amount due on the mortgage may be greater on the day of sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information:
Name(s) of the mortgagor(s): James L. Willington a single man
Original Mortgagee: FINANCIAL FREEDOM SENIOR FUNDING CORPORATION , A SUBSIDIARY OFINDYMAC BANK, F.S.B.
Foreclosing Assignee (if any): GITSIT Solutions, LLC, not in its individual capacity but solely in its capacity as Separate Trustee of GV Trust 2025-1
Date of Mortgage: January 8, 2007
Date of Mortgage Recording: January 19, 2007
Amount claimed due on date of notice: $138,267.29
Description of the mortgaged premises: Situated in Township of Geneva, Van Buren County, Michigan, and described as: Commencing at the Southwest corner of the Northwest fractional 1/4 of Section 1, Town 1 South,
Range 16 West, According to the Government Survey thereof; thence North on the West Section
line, 6 rods; thence East 11 rods; thence South 6 rods to the East and West 1/4 line; thence West
on same to beginning.
Common street address (if any): 02045 County Road 681, Grand Junction, MI 49056-9587
The redemption period shall be 6 months from the date of such sale, unless determined abandoned in accordance with MCL 600.3241a; or, if the subject real property is used for agricultural purposes as defined by MCL 600.3240(16).
If the property is sold at foreclosure sale under Chapter 32 of the Revised Judicature Act of 1961, pursuant to MCL 600.3278 the borrower will be held responsible to the person who buys the property at the mortgage foreclosure sale or to the mortgage holder for damaging the property during the redemption period.
Attention homeowner: If you are a military service member on active duty, if your period of active duty has concluded less than 90 days ago, or if you have been ordered to active duty, please contact the attorney for the party foreclosing the mortgage at the telephone number stated in this notice.
This notice is from a debt collector.
Date of notice: December 18, 2025
Trott Law, P.C.
31440 Northwestern Hwy, Suite 145
Farmington Hills, MI 48334
(248) 642-2515
1579893
(12-18)(01-08)

County: Van Buren; Mtgr: Aleene Russ; Atty: KREIS ENDERLE - KALAMAZOO - KREIS ENDERLE - KALAMAZOO; 1st Pub: 12/18/2025; Atty File #: (N/A); Insurer: (unknown)
NOTICE OF FORECLOSURE SALE OF LIEN AGAINST CONDOMINIUM UNIT IN THE LIGHTHOUSE VILLAGE AT LIFESTYLES OF SOUTH HAVEN CONDOMINIUM NOTICE OF FORECLOSURE BY ADVERTISEMENT. Notice is given under section 3212 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.3212, that the certain Lien Against Condominium Unit in the Lighthouse Village at Lifestyles of South Haven Condominium ("Lien") will be foreclosed by a sale of the premises (as defined below) at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the Circuit Court in Van Buren County, Michigan, starting promptly at January 22, 2026 at 1:00 p.m. The amount due on the Lien may be greater on the day of the sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information. Attention homeowner: If you are a military service member on active duty, if your period of active duty has concluded less than ninety (90) days ago, or if you have been ordered to active duty, please contact the attorney for the party foreclosing the lien at the telephone number stated in this notice.
Lighthouse Village at Lifestyles of South Haven Condominium Association ("Association") recorded the aforementioned Lien, dated September 9, 2024, against the premises owned by Aleene Russ, a single woman ("Owner"), which address is 72177 Beacon Court, Unit 37, South Haven, Michigan 49090 (the "Premises"). The Premises is a Unit in the Lighthouse Village at Lifestyles of South Haven Condominium. The Lien was recorded on September 9, 2024, in the Van Buren County Register of Deeds, at Liber 1769, Page 818. As of December 18, 2025, the amount claimed to be due under the Lien is the sum of Seven Thousand One Hundred Forty and 00/100 Dollars ($7,140.00), including interest and attorney fees. This sum will increase as additional interest, costs, expenses, and attorney fees accrue under the Lien which are permitted under Michigan law. Under the power of sale contained in the Condominium Bylaws and under Section 108 of the Michigan Condominium Act, as amended, notice is hereby given that the Lien will be foreclosed by sale of the Premises at public sale to the highest bidder at the Van Buren County Courthouse, which address is 212 East Paw Paw Street, 2nd Floor, Paw Paw, Michigan 49079, and which is the place of the holding of the Circuit Court for Van Buren County, State of Michigan, on January 22, 2026, at 1:00 p.m. The Premises is situated in the Township of South Haven, County of Van Buren, State of Michigan and legally described as follows: Unit 37, Lighthouse Village at Lifestyles of South Haven Condominium, a Condominium according to the Master Deed recorded in Liber 1453 on Page 859 inclusive, and amendments thereto and designated as Van Buren County Condominium Subdivision Plan No. 102, together with rights in general common elements and limited common elements as set forth in said Master Deed and as described in Act 59 of Public Acts of 1978, as amended. Premises Address: 72177 Beacon Court, Unit 37, South Haven, Michigan 49090 Premises Tax ID: 80-17-171-037-00 If the Premises is eventually sold at foreclosure sale, the redemption period will be six (6) months from the date of sale, unless the Premises is abandoned, in which case the redemption period may be shortened in accordance with Michigan law. If the Premises is sold at a foreclosure sale under Chapter 32 of the Revised Judicature Act of 1961, under MCL 600.3278, the Owner and any other person liable on the Lien will be held responsible to the person who buys the Premises at the foreclosure sale or to the Lien holder for damaging the Premises during the redemption period. Dated: December 18, 2025 LIEN HOLDER: LIGHTHOUSE VILLAGE AT LIFESTYLES OF SOUTH HAVEN CONDOMINIUM ASSOCIATION c/o LASR ASSOCIATION MANAGEMENT ATTN: KATELYN SCOFIELD-STANFILL 764 LAGRANGE SOUTH HAVEN MI 49090 Attorneys for the Lighthouse Village at Lifestyles of South Haven Condominium Association: Kreis, Enderle, Hudgins & Borsos, P.C. By: Jeffrey D. Swenarton 750 Trade Centre Way, Suite 250 Portage, Michigan 4900
(12-18)(01-08)

County: Van Buren; Mtgr: James H. Vanderkolk; Atty: ANDREW BARNES - ANDREW BARNES; 1st Pub: 1/8/2026; Atty File #: (N/A); Insurer: (unknown)
NOTICE TO CREDITORS TO ALL CREDITORS:
The Decedent, James H. Vanderkolk, whose last known address was 47398 Dobben Dr., Bloomingdale, MI 49026, died February 28, 2024. There is no Personal Representative of the Decedent's Estate to whom letters of administration have been issued. Creditors of the Decedent are notified that all claims against the Decedent's estate will be forever barred unless presented to Julia K. Vincent, Trustee of The James H. Vanderkolk and Marilynn R. Vanderkolk Trust Dated November 11, 2014, within four months after the date of this publication. Notice is further given that the Trust will thereafter be assigned and distributed to the persons entitled to it. Dated: December 30, 2025 Julia K. Vincent, Trustee of The James H. Vanderkolk and Marilynn R. Vanderkolk Trust Dated November 11, 2014 18484 CR 687 South Haven, MI 49090 Attorneys for Trustee: Andrew W. Barnes (P70571) Butzel Long, P.C. 317 Center Street South Haven, MI 49090 (269) 287-2010
(01-08)

County: Van Buren; Mtgr: Marilynn R. Vanderkolk; Atty: ANDREW BARNES - ANDREW BARNES; 1st Pub: 1/8/2026; Atty File #: (N/A); Insurer: (unknown)
NOTICE TO CREDITORS TO ALL CREDITORS:
The Decedent, Marilynn R. Vanderkolk, whose last known address was 47398 Dobben Dr., Bloomingdale, MI 49026, died December 19, 2025. There is no Personal Representative of the Decedent's Estate to whom letters of administration have been issued. Creditors of the Decedent are notified that all claims against the Decedent's estate will be forever barred unless presented to Julia K. Vincent, Trustee of The James H. Vanderkolk and Marilynn R. Vanderkolk Trust Dated November 11, 2014, within four months after the date of this publication. Notice is further given that the Trust will thereafter be assigned and distributed to the persons entitled to it. Dated: December 30, 2025 Julia K. Vincent, Trustee of The James H. Vanderkolk and Marilynn R. Vanderkolk Trust Dated November 11, 2014 18484 CR 687 South Haven, MI 49090 Attorneys for Trustee: Andrew W. Barnes (P70571) Butzel Long, P.C. 317 Center Street South Haven, MI 49090 (269) 287-2010
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County: Van Buren; Mtgr: Terry A. Tatsch; Atty: ANDREW BARNES - ANDREW BARNES; 1st Pub: 1/8/2026; Atty File #: (N/A); Insurer: (unknown)
NOTICE TO CREDITORS TO ALL CREDITORS: The Decedent, Terry A. Tatsch, whose last known address was 734 Wilson St., South Haven, MI 49090, died November 22, 2025. There is no Personal Representative of the Decedent's Estate to whom letters of administration have been issued. Creditors of the Decedent are notified that all claims against the Decedent's estate will be forever barred unless presented to Elizabeth A. Tatsch, Trustee of The Terry A. Tatsch Trust Agreement Dated November 9, 2020, within four months after the date of this publication. Notice is further given that the Trust will thereafter be assigned and distributed to the persons entitled to it. Dated: December 18, 2025 Elizabeth A. Tatsch, Trustee of The Terry A. Tatsch Trust Agreement Dated November 9, 2020 2213 Country Hills Ct. Rolla, MO 65401 Attorneys for Trustee: Andrew W. Barnes (P70571) Zachary S. Smith (P81036) Butzel Long, P.C. 317 Center Street South Haven, MI 49090 (269) 287-2010
(01-08)

GOBLES PUBLIC SCHOOLS SCHOOLS OF CHOICE PROGRAM 2025-2026

Gobles Public School District recognizes the Schools of Choice Program adopted by the Michigan legislature and plans to implement the Schools of Choice Program for the 2025-2026 school year. Gobles Public Schools will accept applications from non-resident students residing within the Van Buren Intermediate School District boundaries, and in school districts located in contiguous intermediate school districts for the 2025-2026 school year under the Schools of Choice Program and will comply with the deadlines and requirements set forth by the law.

Applications for the Schools of Choice Program are available on line at (www.gobles.org) and in the Superintendent's Office and will be accepted beginning January 5, 2026 through January 23, 2026. The District will notify the parent or legal guardian of each nonresident applicant who is accepted for enrollment of the date by which the student must enroll and the procedures for enrollment.

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